

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Application No. 09/820,834

Q Sub B1
obstacle is encountered while said footing is being driven into the ground, thereby preventing the socket member from being damaged, an elongated post segment, and a connector axially inserted into said elongated post segment and said socket member for joining said post segment and said footing together in an end-to-end relationship.

Sub B2
Q
NEW
MATTER
10. (amended) A footing for holding a post segment above a ground surface, comprising a socket member that is protected against deformation while being implanted into the ground by an outer sleeve, said outer sleeve having trailing and leading ends, said leading end being adapted to be forcibly driven into the ground in response to a driving force applied to said trailing end, said socket member being held within said outer sleeve with said leading end of said outer sleeve extending beyond said socket member (for allowing said socket member to move deeper into said outer sleeve in the event that an obstacle be encountered while said footing is being driven into the ground, thereby protecting the socket member against deformation, wherein said socket member defines a socket adapted to receive a post structural member once said footing has been installed in the ground.

Please add new claims 21 and 22 as follows:

Sub B3
Q
NEW
MATTER
21. (new) A post comprising a footing adapted to be driven into the ground, said footing including a socket member that is protected against deformation while being implanted into the ground by an outer sleeve, said outer sleeve having trailing and leading ends, said leading end being adapted to be forcibly driven into the ground in response to a driving force applied to said trailing end, said socket member being received within said outer sleeve with said leading end of said outer sleeve extending beyond said socket member (for allowing said socket member to move deeper into said outer sleeve in the event that an obstacle is encountered while said footing is being driven into the ground, thereby preventing the socket member from being damaged, an elongated post segment, and a connector axially inserted into said elongated post segment and said socket member for joining said post segment and said footing together in an end-to-end relationship, further including at least one stabilizer removably fitted over said outer sleeve to provide lateral stability to said post,